MEMORIAL CONCERT
FIGHT BACK
PIG ROAST
Day Monday Ma 30th
Square Park 2 pm-7 pm.
MISSING FOUNDATION
HELP STOP THE
CHINATOWN
SEX FIEND
REGISTRATION
EXTINCT
TERRORISM

Ryan in Loft Bed, Fifth Street Squat, 1996

Fifth Street Stairwell, Before Stairs, 1994

FOLLOWING Star Wars Mural in Fifth Street Squat Community Room by Adam, 1995

Famous and Fly Working on Window I, Seventh Street Squat, 1994
Famous and Fly Working on Window II, Seventh Street Squat, 1994
Ryan Cutting a Window Guard, Dos Blockos, 1996
Toby on a Demolition Day, Fifth Street Squat, 1994

Most squatters would work the equivalent of full-time jobs on building their apartments, and preparing them for winter survival. Women and men worked side by side, equally. We would have group "work days" for the building residents, when we had big projects like repairing the roof, installing stairs and floor foundations, and running electricity.

Famous Jackhammering a New Window, Seventh Street Squat, 1994

Installing I-Beam Support I, Fifth Street Squat, 1995
Installing I-Beam Support II, Fifth Street Squat, 1995
Cement Work for First Floor Landing, Fifth Street Squat, 1995

Jill Cutting Window Slats, Fifth Street Squat, 1995
Heidi Working on Apartment Ceiling, Fifth Street Squat, 1995
K.D. with Circular Saw, Fifth Street Squat, 1995
Carrie Taking a Break From Working on the Window, Fifth Street Squat, 1995

Taz Rolling a Smoke, Fifth Street Squat, 1994

I've always been a traveler, a nomad, a lost girl . . .

I was seeking to find purpose, community, and wanted to learn to be strong enough and capable enough to lead with a proud honorable mastery of survival in my own life. There is respect for the purpose of being self-sufficient and utilizing all resources and creating something that would be a contribution of a revolutionary thumbprint. This is a great opportunity to show a perspective of a lifestyle and culture of its own which is pure, raw, humbling, and honorable.

This is some kind of gateway to how squatting began, as my life. I'm a kid disappearing for days to weeks at a time at 13. Eventually weeks turned into months, which landed me to this conversation. Starting in PA where I'm from, went up and down the East Coast then to the West Coast to LA and SF.

Later I would migrate to the LES, Manhattan, and NYC. Otherwise known as my only trusted home of certainty. Welcome to See Skwat, my first safe, comfortable shell of bricks on Ninth and C in the LES in 1991. I started out on the fifth floor, later fourth, then third which was my favorite. The first few months I was there, there was no roof, no sheetrocked walls, no floors, no toilets, no water, no electric, no heat unless a wood burning stove existed. Over the course of years and years the puzzle pieces are slowly put together. The salvaged golden garbage and recyclables became the literal foundation of our home.

There was nothing but a shell, however it was completely perfect to me.

We used the magic key down on the corner to open the fire hydrants and carried two five-gallon buckets at a time up the hellish stairs, up to our rooms. Every once in a while we'd be able to have electricity for short periods of time if we were able to go into the manhole and connect the electric with a van over the manhole while we were watching out for the cops. When we did have electricity, we used hot plates and toaster ovens unless somebody might have a stove which was a rarity. We still used refrigerators even though they didn't always work. It kept the rats away. Maybe. We had house cats which helped keep the rodents away. Lizzy was my favorite, she disappeared or was killed, as was always the case.

The best part of my life was working on that building, it taught me skills, selflessness, trust, community, and pride. Garbage day was the early morning workout of the week. Tons of endless rubble and mesh covered in lead paint and probably asbestos with five or six of us struggling to make it go smooth as the garbage men just impressively stared.

Life's reward was being there and taking nothing for granted. The accomplishments are endless. I was, and still am, 100% in love with the loyalty that bled out of every single one of us. Our squatting community consisted of truth, trust, skills, resourcefulness, survivalists, selflessness, compassion, knowledge, tolerance, expression, and commitment. Although I have moved from the LES, I am forever in connection, through the family bonded individuals that are in my heart. I will eternally support the efforts and struggles of a lifestyle that is more respected by me than any other. We are individuals that stand together. Together the bond completely unbreakable.

—TAZ, See Skwat

Aro and Rebecca with Bicycle, Fifth Street Squat, 1996

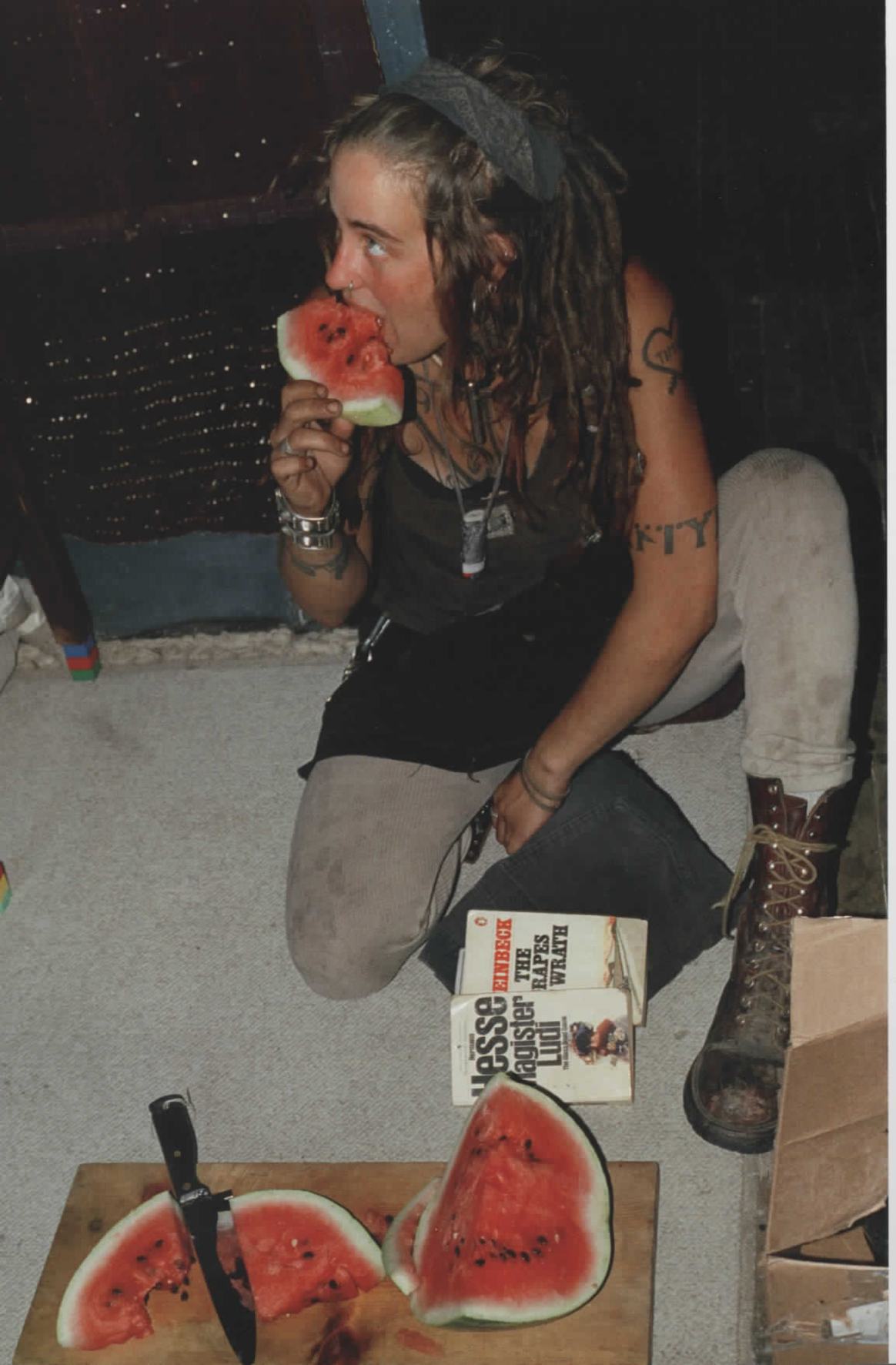
I dragged Roger with me when I left Rochester. We were planning to hitchhike or whatever around the states, but only made it to my hometown of Queens. We found a building under the Queensborough Bridge next to Queensbridge Park and the projects, but it proved extremely difficult to squat. We got so much flack from the cops around there (wrong color), and we were so far removed from anybody we knew downtown, we decided to scrap it.

We had made a few peeps' acquaintance from See Skwat and decided to search around and open a building of our own, not wanting to move into the other squats in the area. So Roger, Calli, and I jumped the barbed wire fence at Fifth Street Squat, and made our way through four feet of garbage in the lot to the back of the buildings. We were originally looking to use the building next door, 535 East Fifth Street, but that was the easiest way in. The only flashlight we had was a combination alarm/radio. The three of us were sneaking around back there, I'm clinging a story above the ground to 535 peering in the open window with the light/alarm/radio when the fucking alarm starts blaring away! I couldn't shut the thing off so I dropped it to the ground and they slammed on it until it shut up. The building was shit, totally collapsed, the whole center of the building, really.

I climbed down but before we could leave we see this drunk old man wheeling his bike around the corner of the building. We froze and he couldn't see us. He whips his dick out and starts pissing. He was facing us and finally sees us standing there and jerks himself a little more sober. He puts it away and we approach each other cautiously. First thing he says is something like, "You're lucky the other guy isn't here, he would have attacked you." We met Jimmy again the next evening at the building and also met the "other guy." He was a very psychotic crackhead schizophrenic type dude. The building was overwhelming Jimmy, and there is safety in numbers against crackheads, we needed a building . . . we moved in shortly afterward.

—Aro, 537-539 East Fifth Street Squat

Meggin and Jill Leaning
on the Front of Fifth Street
Squat, 1996



Ryan and Friend Outside of See Skwat, 1998

Amy Eating Watermelon, Bullet Space, 1997

Rebecca Dancing on New Stairs in Fifth Street Squat, 1996

The Joker, Cocktail Party, 1996
Martine and Eden, Cocktail Party, 1996
Neil Diamond, Cocktail Party, 1996
Girl Trio Dancing, Cocktail Party, 1996

The parties we had were wild and creative. They were often taken into the streets, and frequently ended in metal jams (groups of us banging on metal in empty lots) and beer elf-ing (drawing and writing on whoever passed out first).

FOLLOWING The Dregs at ABC No Rio, 1998

No Rio is a squat and collectively run center for art and activism on the Lower East Side.

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